Why does participation matter?

A guide to citizen engagement

Communities Driving Change

Why does participation matter?

A guide to citizen engagement

Project information

Disclaimer   The European Commission support for the production of this publication
                         does not constitute an endorsement of the content which reflects the
                         views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsi-
                         ble for any use which may be made of the information contained the-
                         rein.

Communities Driving Change

Table of contents

A brief introduction to participation

"Local participation is fundamental so that citizens feel represented, included and recognized in decision-making processes. Participation is key to citizens' empowerment because it gives people a sense of responsibility and ownership."

- Cultural and Creative Cities, 2020

Participation is required and encouraged in a democracy. Citizen participation in government and with one another is critical to society. However, one of the major pitfalls of democracy is that even when people participate, the opinions they express may not be taken into account.

Since participation is essential but decreasing, it is important to understand why people do not participate and if they are or not engaged. The two concepts, citizen participation and citizen engagement, are very similar and closely intertwined, and to understand lack of participation it is useful to understand them both. **Citizen engagement** means that citizens are involved and worried with the situation around them, **citizen participation** means that people are acting on their concerns and trying to make an impact in society (Slaev et al., 2019). Participation is essential for democracy, it legitimizes the government and promotes equality.

Participation is a form of actively taking part in activities that influence us. It is an opportunity to speak up and participate in actions and decisions. **Individual participation** ("politics of everyday life") refers to the individual's everyday actions, which define their expectations about the nature and type of society in which they wish to live. Individual participation can take the form of financial support for charitable activities, regular or irregular volunteering, socially conscious consumption, and involvement in social campaigns.

Individuals' participation in joint activities in their immediate living environment is referred to as **social participation,** also known as **horizontal participation**. Involvement in various types of non-governmental organizations, social and economic groups*, as well as active participation in the development and improvement of the living environment, are examples of this group of activities.

Public participation, also known as **vertical, political, or civic participation,** is the involvement of individuals in the activities of a democratic state's structures and institutions, such as participation in elections, consultations conducted by public authorities, and referendums. Also, involvement in public functions and active engagement in political parties are examples of this type of participation.

Participation is more than just a set of techniques for implementing a particular model of governance - **it is a specific understanding of the nature of democracy and a method of applying it, ensuring that citizens have a voice in matters important to them on a regular basis rather than just at the next election.** This applies to matters such as submitting suggestions to authorities on new directions for the development of public policies, consulting their ideas and projects, and practising active control over the actions of politicians.

*Means controlling companies, controlled companies and those affiliated in which there is a relevant influence in the decisions.

How can citizens participate in public life?

"Citizens are at the heart of open government, and their participation represents a fundamental principle of the latter. Despite their essential role and the great potential benefits open government holds for the public, challenges of use among citizens persist."

- Wirtz, Weyerer & Rösch, 2017

Any action organized and coordinated by citizens to influence decisions made by public authorities is referred to as public action. Protests, lobbying, public education, civil disobedience, and advocacy are the most important examples of public action. This type of participation necessitates important organizational and competency participation from citizens and process initiators.

Public involvement refers to a series of activities initiated and coordinated by public entities to carry out their tasks. Involving people is intended to gain support for public-sector activities, and may contribute to the efficient resolution of conflicts that arise, as well as to improve the decision-making process and the quality of services provided. Public involvement is implemented in this category of participation through public consultations, which are a public way of learning about citizens' opinions on a given topic. Other methods and techniques for involving citizens include deliberative consultations, surveys, public hearings, neighborhood meetings, and so on.

Electoral participation - This is a type of citizen activity that is closely related to the representative democracy system. Its purview includes nominating and electing members of society to serve as decision-makers.

Obligatory participation entails all civic activities whose performance and fulfilment are mandated by generally binding law. This category includes obligatory activities such as paying taxes, which should be regarded as the fundamental contribution made by citizens to the functioning of society.

Participation and "nonparticipation"

There are different dimensions of participation in social life. The very useful tool to systematize those dimensions is Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Participation"

8 Citizen Control		
7 Delegated Power	Degress of power of the citizens	
6 Partnership		
5 Placation		
4 Consultation	Degress of tokenism	
3 Informing		
2 Therapy		
1 Manipulation	Nonparticipation	
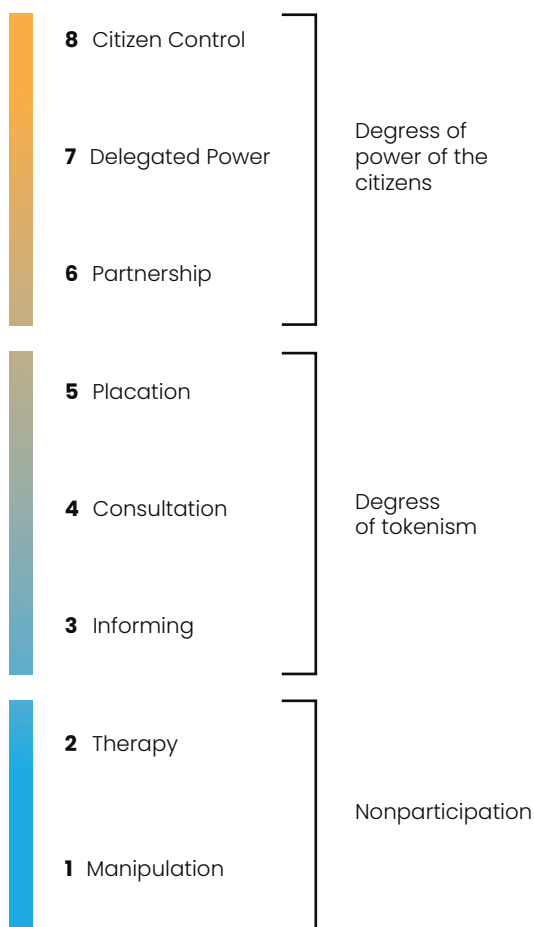
The concept of Ladder of Participation emphasizes that we have different "levels" of participation in public affairs, but only from a certain point onwards do we influence how our environment will change.

At the bottom of the ladder, we have two mechanisms that are an obvious lack of citizen participation in public affairs.

The first is manipulation by power. It happens when, under the cover of some social action, we are misled by the authorities. This means, for example, that we engage in helping some entity, while in reality, it was the duty of public institutions.

The second mechanism is therapy. We speak of it when the authorities "teach" citizens how they should participate, but they promote practices that do not involve any change. An example of this is civic education (in the form of classes, meetings, training sessions), which is limited only to encouraging interest in politics and participation in elections.

The second level of the ladder is collectively defined by the steps of 'tokenism'. Tokenism is the principle or practice of making merely symbolic efforts to include representatives of dominated groups in institutional structures created exclusively or mainly by representatives of dominant groups. Arnstein distinguishes two 'tokenistic' practices - information and consultation. Informing citizens about decisions taken ostensibly gives the impression of respect and partnership. However, it is treating them as subordinates, who are merely acquainted with the decisions taken by the authorities. Consultation goes a step further because it allows citizens to have their say. This expression, however, as we know from numerous consultations, need not to be taken into account at all.

The highest level - the "degrees of power of the citizens". At these levels, citizens already have a real influence on the functioning of their environment. The mechanisms implemented in this area are, therefore (in order): a partnership in action, attempts to mitigate conflicts (also referred to as appeasement - when the authorities take some "pro-social" decisions to appease dissenting voices), power exercised by the residents (understood as delegation, i.e. allowing representatives of the civic sector to participate in power) and finally control by the residents (when it is the citizens who control and hold the authorities to account for their actions).

Why public involvement is important

- Enable high quality and democratic governance, strengthen civil capacity.

- Develop and deliver programs effectively and efficiently.

- Increase public confidence and trust in decision-making.

- Increase public awareness of public issues, concerns, priorities, and solutions.

- Increase public support for programs and initiatives.

- Promote mutual learning by exchanging information, data, and experiences.

- Make certain that decisions and policies incorporate knowledge and expertise that might otherwise be overlooked.

- Reflect a wider range of public concerns and values in decision-making.

- Identify potentially controversial aspects of an issue and assist in bringing different points of view together to reach a collaborative consensus.

Participation around us

Participation
the local level

Participatory budget in Faro municipality – Faro, Portugal

What is the mechanism about?

The Faro Participatory Budget aims to stimulate an active, enlightened and responsible civic intervention by the citizens of the municipality of Faro, in the proposal and decision on the projects they want to see implemented with a share of the municipality's financial resources.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

Municipality of Faro.

Who can participate?

All citizens aged 18 or over who are registered in Faro or who can prove that they live, work or study in the municipality can participate in the Faro Participatory Budget.

How does it work?

Faro City Hall allocates part of its budget for the disposal of the residents. The global amount of the Faro Participatory Budget is divided to support two groups of projects:

- To implement projects proposed by citizens aged 18 years old or more (Faro PB).
- To implement projects proposed by students from the 3rd cycle or secondary school, who attend educational establishments in the municipality. (OP Faro-Schools)

Proposals can be submitted:

- Through the Internet, on the portal of the Faro Participatory Budget of the Municipality of Faro
- In person, in participatory assemblies.

With the presentation of proposals or voting on projects, citizens accept the rules of the portal and the Faro Participatory Budget (OP Faro and OP Faro Swchools). Proposals may refer to activities, investments or maintenance works, and must not refer to initiatives already implemented/developed.

Voting on the projects validated by Faro Municipality shall take place online in the portal of the Faro Participatory Budget and/or in other places and means that may be defined in the rules of each edition, and shall be carried out in a single phase. In the voting phase, each citizen can vote for a maximum number of projects, according to the rules of each edition. For those who wish, computers with internet access will be available, assisted by technicians with adequate training to assist citizens in the voting process in locations to be defined in each edition. The secrecy of voting will always be guaranteed and support will be provided so that all those interested can vote.

Where to get more information?
op.cm-faro.pt

Thessaloniki, Greece
Communal Assembly

What is the mechanism about?

Communal Assembly is an informal meeting between citizens and local decision-makers. These meetings do not have a scheduled framework but happen several times within a year, organized by the municipality.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

The mechanism has an informal character and it's not mandatory. Responsible for the local authorities as well as important factors to the community. In particular, in Stratoni village of Aristotle's municipality, most of the people are employed by a metal factory, resulting in the consideration of the factory's representatives at the assemblies.

Who can participate?

Citizens of the village/town/municipality, depending on the geographical breadth of the discussed topics.

How does it work?

Citizens' opinions are taken into consideration. Citizens can ask questions to the authorities and community about issues that concern them. Politicians and local people with political status are always invited and try to answer the questions raised.

Where to get more information?

It usually is announced by the spread of mouth, by megaphone or by posters. There is no official structure that is followed.

Timișoara, Romania
Local Youth Strategy

What is the mechanism about?

Creating an adapted and inclusive framework to support personal development and professional training of young people in Timisoara, as well as for the participation of young people. Timisoara residents to public life and the sustainable development of local society.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

The Strategy was developed together by:

- Municipality of Timisoara
- Timis County Youth Foundation
- County Direction for Sport and Youth
- "Altfel" Initiative Group

Who can participate?

All organisations/people that work with youngsters in the following fields:

- Youth work
- Professional development of youth
- Culture
- Formal education
- Environment and sustainable development
- Health, social assistance, personal development
- Non-formal education and sport

How does it work?

All entities that work with youngsters as mentioned above have the basis on which to implement their activities. The Strategy provides and works as a support document because it is, at its core, a study of the needs of youth in the key fields identified during the surveys and interviews. Sociological research has been conducted and 940 youngsters have been involved in the development of the strategy.

Where to get more information?

- v1.fitt.ro/2017/03/13/strategia-pentru-tineret-a-municipiului-timisoara-2014-2020
- primariatm.ro/comunitate/tineret/strategia-de-tineret

Initiatives for Kaunas – Kaunas, Lithuania

What is the mechanism about?

"Initiatives for Kaunas" is a program created by Kaunas City Municipality and financed by municipal funds, which invites non-governmental organizations and city communities to contribute to the solution of Kaunas city problems by offering initiatives and submitting applications. During this program, the city does not fund organizations, but activities based on submitted projects that address relevant issues and are focused on clear results. Every citizen can join the activities of the community operating in his district, express concerns and solve problems with the help of Kaunas City Municipality.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

Kaunas City Municipality, to be more specific, Municipal Strategic Planning, Analysis and Program Management Division.

Who can participate?

All organizations, companies and/or individuals who want to receive funding for the implementation of their idea in Kaunas City.

How does it work?
There are a few steps:

1. Follow when a call for project applications will be published at paraiskos.kaunas.lt/vykstantys-konkursai. Before writing the application, check the program areas and priorities, funded activities, cost and project quality requirements, desired results, requirements for applicants, project evaluation criteria, application procedure, and other relevant data.
2. Submit an application.
3. Wait for the application to be evaluated (Assessment of administrative compliance, suitability and utility evaluation).
4. Sign the contract (Proper implementation of activities, achievement of expected results and accountability are the key to successful project implementation. During the implementation of the project, the promoters will be asked to provide information related to the project activities and the final report on the implementation of the project).
5. Consult and implement.

Where to get more information?
iniciatyvos.kaunas.lt

National level

Youth Parliament - Portugal

What is the mechanism about?

The Young People's Parliament is an institutional initiative of the Assembleia da República that is carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (via the respective Regional Education Directorates), the Regional Secretariats responsible for education and youth in the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira and the Secretariat of State for Youth and Sports, via the Portuguese Institute for Youth. The Programme runs throughout the academic year including the many schools from all over the country who wish to participate and ends with two Sessions at the Parliament, held in April and May:

- One Session aimed at secondary school students (over 15 years old).
- One Session aimed at students from the 2nd and 3rd elementary school cycles (10-15 years old).

Objectives/Goals:

- To promote the interest of young people in civic and political participation.
- To underline the importance of their contribution in solving questions affecting their individual and collective present and future, through the dissemination of their proposals in political bodies.
- To publicize the significance of parliamentary representation and the decision-making process of Parliament, in

its capacity as representative body of Portuguese citizens.
- To encourage the development of argumentative skills to defend ideas based on the respect for values such as tolerance and the will of the majority.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

Overall coordination of the Programme is the responsibility of a Project Team of the Assembleia da República (reporting to the Secretary-General) and follows guidelines defined by the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Science.

The partner entities, namely the Regional Education Directorates and the Portuguese Institute for Youth, via their regional delegations, have a particularly important role during the preparatory stages leading up to the National Sessions of the Young People's Parliament.

Who can participate?

Any public, private or cooperative school may register: schools may be from the mainland, from the Autonomous Regions (Azores and Madeira) and from overseas constituencies in Europe and outside Europe.

The Secretariat of State for the Portuguese Communities is responsible for promoting participation from overseas in order for Por-

tuguese young people living abroad to join this initiative.

The act of registration is decided by each school. Registration is formalized once the on-line registration form is submitted.

How does it work?

The Young People's Parliament Programme takes place in several stages throughout the academic year. These phases are similar for the Sessions for both elementary and secondary schools. The Programme runs along the following lines:

- Theme Debate at school, involving as many students as possible, as well as the wider educative community. The school may invite Members of Parliament from its constituency to attend the debate.

- Electoral campaign and elections in which students organise themselves in candidate lists and defend their recommendations in response to the theme of their Session.

- School Session with the elected students, in order to approve the Draft Recommendation of the school and elect their representatives to the District or Regional Session.

- District or Regional Session, with the presence of a Member of Parliament, to approve the decisions of each electoral constituency and elect the school members of parliament to the National Session of the Young People's Parliament.

- National Session of the Young People's Parliament at the Assembleia da República. Committee meetings and the plenary sitting take place over a period of 2 days. Members of Parliament preside over the Committees and participate in a "question time" during the plenary sitting. The President of the Assembly of the Republic opens each Session.

Where to get more information?
jovens.parlamento.pt

Students' Union - Greece

What is the mechanism about?

Students' Unions are legal organisations that are representing the university to which they belong. They are made up of students who have been chosen through democratic procedures (elections) and who frequently belong to student parties that are affiliated with political parties and look for solutions to problems they may be experiencing.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

All universities have a Students' Union. Students' Unions are legal entities that have to exist, and their representatives are recognised in decision-making processes that concern the respective university.

Who can participate?

Any student of the university that the Students' Union belongs to, can apply in the respective elections. Sometimes Students' Unions are split into pre-graduate and post-graduate students.

16

How does it work?

Every year there are elections through which the members of the Students' Unions are getting elected. Students' Unions are usually legal entities that take part and contribute to the educational process of the universities, as well as for decisions that concern any issues that students' may face as a group.

The main means of decision-making and action consist of the General Assembly. There is also one bigger entity that represents the students of all Greece which is called the National Students' Union of Greece and it consists of members of the Students' Unions across the country. Although it is not active anymore, the different Students' Unions unite their forces when it comes to defending rights that concern the whole students' community of Greece in an informal way.

Where to get more information?

By google-ing any Greek university and adding "φοιτητικός σύλλογος (students' association)" you will get directed to the respective associations.

e.g. aueb.gr/en

Romanian Youth Council

What is the mechanism about?

The purpose of the Romanian Youth Council is to act for the defence and promotion of the rights of Romanian young people in the country and abroad, as well as to increase their active participation in the life of the communities they belong to. Romanian Youth Council supports the common interests of its members at local, regional, national, European and international levels.

The Romanian Youth Council has commit-ted itself to ensure the presence of a strong voice of young people institutionally and publicly in the process of developing public policies, aimed at young people and which can have a significant impact on young people, including in areas related to employment, education, health, civic and political participation and volunteering.

In this respect, the Romanian Youth Council is the main non-governmental partner on youth issues concerning the central authorities and public institutions empowered in the field of youth policies.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

The Romanian Youth Council has a board that is directly responsible for the management. The board is headed by a President who is elected together with all the other board members through a democratic process (each member has the right to a vote).

The Romanian Youth Council is not affiliated with any political party and is a stand-alone organization with legal rights, thus not being influenced by any external factors; only by the decisions of the members.

Who can participate?

Romanian Youth Council (RO: Consiliul Tineretului din România) is a federation/national body that represents a union of NGOs (Youth Associations, Foundations and Student Organisations)

Currently, CTR brings together 22 federal structures, with a network of over 500 youth organizations in the country, being the only structure in Romania affiliated to the European Youth Forum and the World Assembly of Youth Youth).

How does it work?
Structure:

- General Assembly
- Permanent Bureau
- Board of Directors
- Control and Arbitration Commission
- Censors Commission

The Romanian Youth Council also has a representative on the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe.

Thus, to achieve the assumed objectives, CTR aims to carry out the following main activities, addressed primarily to young people:

- Lobbying and advocacy activities for the rights and interests of young people.
- Organization of conferences, symposia, congresses, round tables, seminars, etc. on various fields of interest for young people.

- Conducting specific studies and research.
- Organizing information and awareness campaigns.
- Organization of training and professional development courses in different fields of activity and levels of training.
- Providing advice and guidance in the field of academic and professional training.
- Provision of expertise, consultancy, training and instruction services for natural persons, non-governmental organizations or other interested legal persons.
- Elaboration and editing of courses, textbooks, scientific publications, information and training materials, magazines, albums, brochures, etc.
- Recruitment, training and placement of qualified staff, especially young people, for interested legal entities in the country and abroad.
- Establishment and administration of information and counselling points.
- Establishment and administration of entrepreneurial development centres.
- Establishment and administration of training centres and competence assessment centres.

Where to get more information?

- ctr.ro
- facebook.com/consiliultineretulu

"City Alumni" – Lithuania

What is the mechanism about?

"City Alumni" is a social platform designed to bring together people from the same city, town or region to work together for the benefit of their hometown. Its' goal is to connect people who have left their city but are indifferent to it with their native community and to encourage them to communicate, create and act together.

Currently, the following priority directions and projects stand out:

1. Relationship with schools (vocational guidance, dissemination of history, counselling, reading reports, etc.).
2. Cooperation with municipalities and development of development vision.
3. Formation of the city image and dissemination of knowledge about the city.
4. Promoting community spirit (organizing events involving the whole local community, drawing attention to certain groups in society and inviting them to interact).

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

"City Alumni" is initiated and organized by Global Shapers Vilnius HUB (https://www.facebook.com/GlobalShapersVilnius/; https://globalshapersvilnius.com/)

But after you join the city group, the main responsible structure is its' ambassador and the main team. There are different types of what kind of member a person can be:

- The ambassador and the main teams are the energy and engine of the City's Alumni Club. It is a person and a whole team that brings together Alumni members, organizes tools for them to contribute to the development of their hometown, and helps caregivers and organizers.
- A patron is a highly accomplished and recognized city or town actor who supports the Alumni Club, its members, and the city itself.
- Organizer - This is one of the members of the City Alumni team developing this platform.
- Member - a member of the Alumni Club, working with like-minded people inside the club. Most of these members no longer live in their hometown, i. is an Alumni.

Who can participate?

All people who are not indifferent to their hometowns.

City Alumni members can choose the city their Alumni Club would like to belong to. They can also join several clubs or contribute to the development of the initiative itself.

The number of cities and towns which have already joined the initiative is constantly growing (but anyone can initiate creating the community in their hometown as well!) and right not there are Alytus, Birštonas, Druskininkai, Gargždai, Ignalina, Kupiškis, Marijampolė, Mažeikiai, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Šilalė, Utena, Varėna, Tauragė, Pasvalys, Šilutė, Kaunas.

How does it work?

There are a few steps:

1. Register — bit.ly/3AWFzN2
2. Be approved
3. Meet your city Alumni community
4. Start doing the activities together and initiating new ones

Where to get more information?
cityalumni.lt

Participation at the European level

Citizens' Initiative

What is the mechanism about?

Starting day for gathering signatures: 25th September 2020, ending day is 25th March 2022.

Establish the introduction of unconditional basic incomes throughout the EU which ensure every person's material existence and opportunity to participate in society as part of its economic policy.

This aim shall be reached while remaining within the competencies conferred to the EU by the Treaties.

They request the EU Commission to propose unconditional basic incomes throughout the EU, which reduce regional disparities to strengthen the economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU.
This shall realize the aim of the joint statement by the European Council, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, stated in 2017, that "the EU and its member states will also support efficient, sustainable and equitable social protection systems to guarantee basic income" in order to combat inequality.

To allow a new ECI for basic income, the objective had to be adjusted in such a way that the European Commission sees possibilities to treat this ECI. The EC should not put items

on the agenda for the EU that are non-economic. So the social aspect of basic income was what the rejection rested on.

The solution then came from a different legal description of the objective. There is no longer talk about "Basic Income" but about "Basic Incomes" in plural so that it is about the various countries themselves and not about the EU as a whole.

The aim is to get 1 million signatures before the end date of 25 March 2022.

Seven countries need to reach 100% or more of the threshold to make the initiative valid!

Who is responsible for the mechanism?
European Commission

Who can participate?
European Citizens

How does it work?

Step 1 – Get started
Before launching an initiative, it is worth considering some of the key practical aspects, including:

- Is asking for EU legislation to be passed the best way to achieve your goals?
- You must first set up a group of organisers composed of at least 7 EU citizens living in 7 different EU countries. To do so, you need to find people to team up with across Europe who is willing to support your issue.
- How will you organise your campaign to collect the signatures?

Step 2: Get your initiative registered
Before you can start collecting signatures for your initiative, you have to ask the Commission to register it. For this, you will need to:

- Create an organiser account. You will use this to manage your initiative and liaise with the Commission throughout its lifecycle.
- Provide a description of your initiative in one of the official EU languages (as well as details and relevant documents on the group of organisers, funding received, etc.)
- The Commission is not obliged to register all initiatives. It only registers initiatives that meet certain criteria. Once you ask for your initiative to be registered, we will assess whether or not to accept it. You will receive an answer within 2 months (or sometimes 4 months).

Step 3: Get support
You need to get the support of at least 1 million people, with minimum numbers in at least seven EU countries. They must fill in a specific statement of support form.
You can collect:

- On paper (pre-filled forms, downloadable from your organiser account) or
- Online (choose between 2 options).
- These forms are available in all EU official languages.

Timing

When you're ready to launch your campaign, you must set a kick-off date (at the latest 6 months from the date your initiative was registered) and inform the Commission 10 working days before. You then have 12 months to collect the minimum number of statements of support.

Who can sign?
To sign, people must be:

- EU nationals (nationals of an EU country)
- Old enough to vote in European elections or aged at least 16 in some countries

TIP – *It's better to collect more signatures than you need. Sometimes the authorities in each country might not be able to validate all the statements of support you provide. Throughout the collection procedure, you have to comply with data protection rules.*

Step 4: Get statements of support verified
If you manage to collect enough signatures within the 12-month timeframe, group them by nationality and send them for verification to the competent authorities in each EU country. You have up to 3 months to do so.

The authorities then have another 3 months to verify which statements of support are valid (they will issue you with a certificate for this).

TIP – *If you use the Commission's central online system to collect statements of support, you can also use our secure file exchange service to transfer them (collected on paper*

and online) to the national authorities. We take care of this transfer.

Step 5: Submit your initiative
Once you've received the last certificate from the national authorities, you have 3 months to submit your initiative to the Commission – together with the information on the support and funding you've received for the initiative.

Step 6: Get an answer
Once you've submitted your initiative, the examination of your initiative starts:

- Within 1 month
You'll meet with representatives of the Commission so you can explain the issues raised in your initiative in detail.

- Within 3 months
You'll have the opportunity to present your initiative at a public hearing at the European Parliament. Parliament may also hold a debate in a full (plenary) session, which could lead to it adopting a resolution related to your issue.

- Within 6 months
The Commission will spell out what action it will propose in response to your initiative (if any), and its reasons for taking (or not taking) action. This response will be in the form of a communication formally adopted by the Commissioners and published in all official EU languages.

What next?

- Legislation

If the Commission considers legislation an appropriate response to your initiative, it will start preparing a formal proposal. This can require preparatory steps like public consultations, impact assessments, etc. Once adopted by the Commission, the proposal is submitted to the European Parliament and the EU Council (or in some cases, only to the Council), which will need to adopt it for it to become law.

- Other action

The Commission is not obliged to propose legislation. Even where it responds positively, the most appropriate follow-up to an initiative may be non-legislative. There is a range of other measures that may be more suitable.

- Follow-up

The European Parliament may also assess the measures taken by the Commission.

Where to get more information?
europa.eu/citizens-initiative/_en

European Parliament Elections

What is the mechanism about?

Since the first direct elections in 1979, European elections are held every five years with more than 400 million people eligible to vote.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?
European Parliament

Who can participate?

All EU citizens have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate in European Parliament elections in their country of origin, or if they live in another EU country, they may choose to vote and stand there, under the same conditions as the nationals of that country.

How does it work?

EU member states are required to hold European Parliament elections:

- By direct universal suffrage;
- By free and secret ballot;
- They must be held based on proportional representation (PR) – either a list system or single transferable vote (STV). Seats are allocated broadly in proportion to the number of votes received.

Each member state returns a fixed number of members of the European Parliament (MEPs); from six, for smaller member states like Malta, Luxembourg and Cyprus to ninety-six for Germany, the largest.

Where to get more information?
europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/elections

Conference on the Future of Europe

What is the mechanism about?

The Conference on the Future of Europe is a unique and timely opportunity for European citizens to debate on Europe's challenges and priorities. No matter where you are from or what you do, this is the place to think about what future you want for the European Union. The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission have committed to listen to Europeans and to follow up, within their sphere of competences, on the recommendations made. By spring 2022, the Conference is expected to reach conclusions and provide guidance on the future of Europe.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?
European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission

Who can participate?

European citizens, from all walks of life and corners of the Union, with young people playing a central role in shaping the future of the European project. European, national, regional and local authorities, as well as civil society and other organisations who want to organise events and contribute ideas.

How does it work?

The first step to making your voice heard is registering on the Conference on the Future of Europe platform. Once you log in, it's time to join the discussion, select one of the topics below to get started:

- Climate change and environment
- Health
- A stronger economy, social justice and jobs
- EU in the world
- Values and rights, rule of law, security
- Digital transformation
- European democracy
- Migration
- Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

Discuss other citizens' ideas
There are already so many ideas being discussed on our platform. As part of the Conference, we encourage you to endorse your favourites and add to ideas in the comments section. Remember, this is a place for ideas to grow.

Create an event
Would you like to create an event? You can host online discussions with people across Europe to capture a wide range of perspectives and share your ideas further.

Join the event
Online events are happening all across Europe. You search for events by topic or use the interactive map to find events happening near you.

Where to get more information?
futureu.europa.eu/?locale=en

Participation in
the times of COVID-19

The outbreak of the pandemic coronavirus has had a serious impact on many aspects of our lives - physical and mental health, work, social interaction, etc. Compulsory isolation has made social interaction difficult, and what had previously seemed a matter of course - such as the right to assembly - has become a privilege. The pandemic outbreak is also a challenge to the participatory process at all levels – individual, social and public. People and governments all over the world are trying to minimize the impact of a pandemic, while not forgetting other issues such as ecology and combating poverty. The regulations and restrictions were undertaken in the framework of the fight against the pandemic challenge of traditional participatory methods, resulting in new approaches, increased use of digital tools and new civic movements.

- In **France,** the Parliament hosted a virtual public forum with around 15,000 citizens to collect recommendations on post-covid-19 policy priorities. The country also pivoted climate change online assemblies with 150 representative citizens participating in seven-weekend sessions. The network #PourEux emerged as a citizen solidarity movement that serves and delivers meals to the homeless. Likewise, the platform cagette.net for delivery of local fresh products offers an urgency kit for those producers who are unable to sell at present.

- In the **United Kingdom,** assemblies about net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target and the pandemic's impact were organised with 110 randomly selected participants. Four organisations (Traverse, Ada Lovelace Institute, Involve, and Bang the Table) have provided input on the use of technology in response to the COVID-19 crisis with 28 randomly selected participants who took part in a three-week deliberative process. In parallel, the website of the Local Governments Association collects information for local entities, while NGOs organized the national campaign »to raise awareness on the most vulnerable.

- In **Finland**, the Dialogue Academy and Timeout Foundation organized the series »Lockdown Dialogues«.

- In **Norway**, the National Institute of Public Health collaborated with The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities to generalize the use of a mobile phone application that permits offline data capture, making it possible to generate analyses from data on health in real-time.

- In **France**, the department of Haute-Garonne launched the consultation process »Société d'après HauteGaronne« for its citizens to decide how they want the post-covid-19 society to look like.

- In the **German state of Thuringia**, solidarity initiatives between neighbours emerged intending to buy and collect medicines for the elderly and risk groups, cargo bikes for the youngster, as well as babysitters.

- The neighbourhood network in **Berlin (Germany)** also includes those without an internet connection. In case one needs help with their groceries, medicines or pets, one only needs to call the number and enter their post code and type of request which are automatically published on a web page.

- In **Sofia (Bulgaria)**, it is the city council that receives offers of help from citizens, who volunteer to aid the elderly to get food and medication around the city.

- **Birmingham city council (United Kingdom)** created the ad-hoc ›Emergency Community Response Hub‹ to provide food aid to the most vulnerable citizens with new communication channels alongside charities and volunteers.

- **Chemnitz (Germany)** invested in online mechanisms of engagement by addressing all its inhabitants in a live stream assembly with the mayor, deputy mayors, and high representatives from the health sector where people could ask questions that were collected, answered and published on the city's website. Another example is given by Nice (France), which ran a communication campaign to warn people of the ecological impact of throwing away masks.

- For example, **Busto Garolfo city council (Italy)** manages a free-delivery service on the field for food, medicines and other necessities, in collaboration with the municipal social services. In contrast, Alcobendas city council (Spain) created

a platform to share knowledge on the neighbourhood, association and institutional initiatives, such as the Infanta Sofía Hospital's one, which encouraged citizens to write e-mails to those admitted, to be handed by nursing staff.
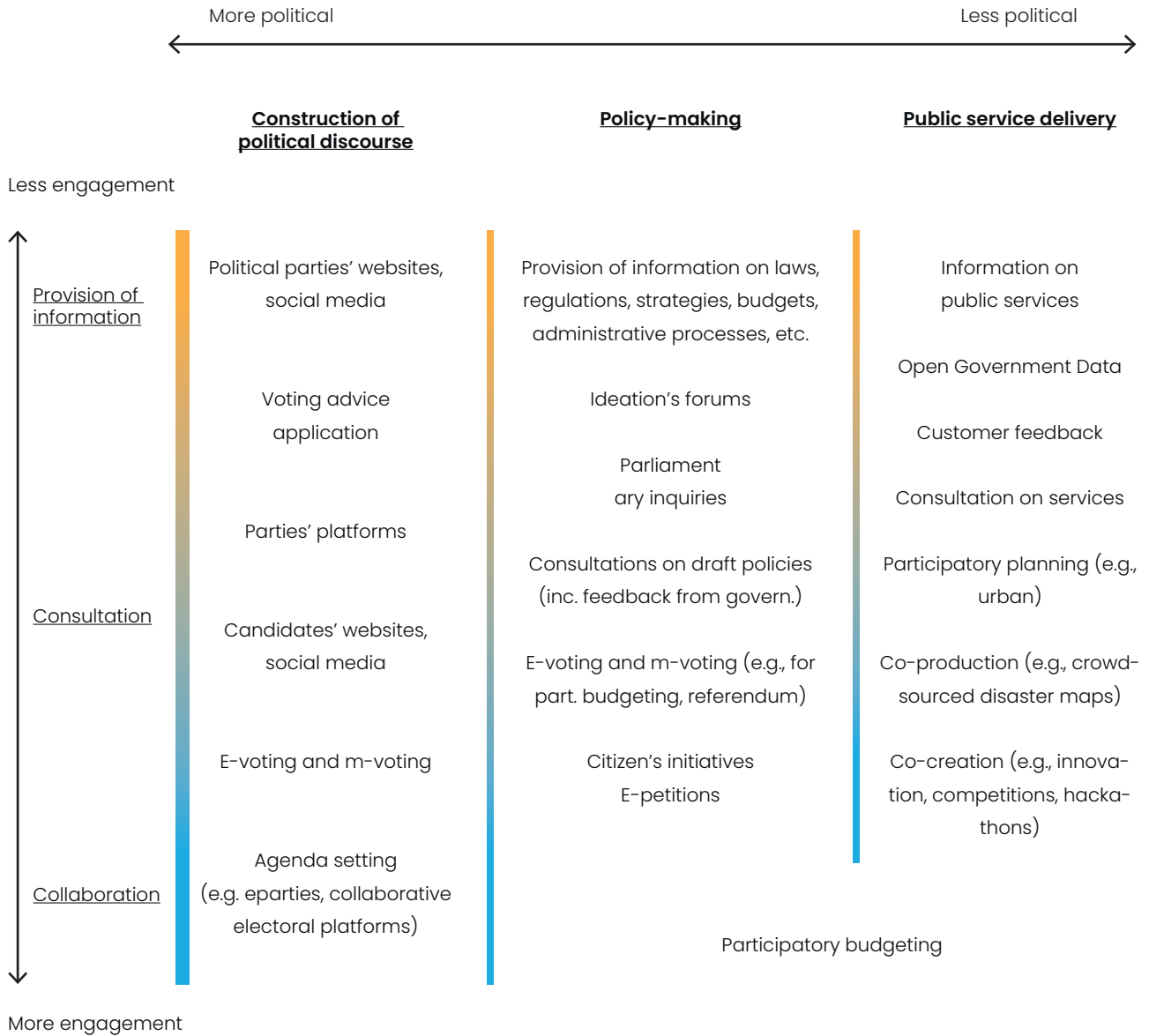
27

E-Participation

E-participation is more than just the electronic aspect of procedures; it is a greater level of civic participation enabled by new communication technology. Civic projects or political dialogues that take place without the involvement of the government as initiator, moderator, or the recipient are usually not covered under e-participation. The term "e-participation" is frequently reduced in procedurally sound democracies to "technologicalization" of ordinary political or administrative procedures, such as the ability to file petitions, vote, or handle different official problems over the Internet. Many diverse objectives connected to citizen participation in co-determining their issues can be achieved using ICT methods, such as multiplying the strength of mobilization actions, such as in various online pro-frequency or protest campaigns.

Experts in e-participation frequently use a three-point scale to distinguish between information provision (in which the government provides information to citizens), consultation (in which the government consults citizens on policy or service delivery at various stages of the process, and possibly provides feedback to them), and decision-making (in which the government makes decisions on behalf of citizens) (whereby the government involves citizens in decision-making). E-enabling, e-engaging, and e-empowering are terms used to describe the three processes. On-line public participation strives to improve the policy-making process by generating better policies, fostering trust, increasing policy acceptance, and sharing policy-making responsibility. Furthermore, public participation increases the participation of marginalized or vulnerable populations. Citizen participation allows for a more accurate assessment of people's preferences regarding the effects of government policies, which can help governments make decisions that are more in line with citizens' desires. The public can contribute fresh ideas, arguments, ideals, and conditions to the participatory process that were not previously considered by decision-makers.

A spectrum of e-participation according to the political dimension and level of participation and examples of associated tools.

Communities
Driving
Change

More political — Less political

	Construction of political discourse	Policy-making	Public service delivery

Less engagement

Provision of information

Political parties' websites, social media

Provision of information on laws, regulations, strategies, budgets, administrative processes, etc.

Information on public services

Open Government Data

Voting advice application

Ideation's forums

Customer feedback

Parliament ary inquiries

Consultation on services

Consultation

Parties' platforms

Consultations on draft policies (inc. feedback from govern.)

Participatory planning (e.g., urban)

Candidates' websites, social media

E-voting and m-voting (e.g., for part. budgeting, referendum)

Co-production (e.g., crowd-sourced disaster maps)

E-voting and m-voting

Citizen's initiatives E-petitions

Co-creation (e.g., innovation, competitions, hacka-thons)

Collaboration

Agenda setting (e.g. eparties, collaborative electoral platforms)

Participatory budgeting

More engagement

E-participation in practice

There are many platforms for citizen participation, some created by governments that want to hear their citizens, others by other organizations that want to empower citizens by giving a voice to concerns that might otherwise be ignored.

FixMyStreet

MySociety is a non-profit organization that was created in 2003 to empower citizens and promote citizen participation through technology (MySociety, 2020).

The organization has built several platforms to support citizen participation in the United Kingdom, **WhatDoTheyKnow** facilitates requesting information from public bodies, **TheyWorkForYou** helps keep citizens informed on what their representatives vote for, **WriteToThem** expedites the process of writing to representatives (MySociety, 2020).

Another one of their platforms, **FixMyStreet was created in 2007,** also in the United Kingdom, but it has since expanded to thirteen other locations all over the world . FixMyStreet - fixmystreet.com - is a public website that allows citizens to report all kinds of local problems, like littering, damaged pavement or street lighting, that report is sent to the appropriate local government body and it is then made public so that everyone in the community can read and add to it.

The website shows data on the number of problems reported, their updates and the number of resolutions, and even the average time it takes for each council to solve the problems. In the data shown in the website, it is easy to see that participation has been rising ever since the platform was created thirteen years ago and that citizens are engaged, with thousands of problems being reported each week.

This platform allows citizens to report what they see in their surroundings, addressing situations that are only noticeable to the people that live in the environment and that would be incredibly costly and difficult to solve in a top-down approach.

Decide Madrid

DecideMadrid - decide.madrid.es - is another great platform for citizen participation, this one, exclusive to the capital of Spain.

This platform launched in 2015 and in 2018 won an United Nations Public Service Award. Some of the success of the platform might be due to the fact that it includes many forms of e-participation. While FixMyStreet was mostly meant to report problems, through DecideMadrid, citizens can create proposals, participate in e-forums, e-voting, participatory budgets and e-consultation. In the first three years, over 400 thousand citizens registered, with different forms of participation having different levels of adherence

Map Services

The use of websites and applications for mobile devices map services enables hundreds of thousands of citizens in various regions of the world to instantly report to officials where in the public space of their town some problem requiring the intervention of law enforcement services has appeared (like graffiti, fly-tipping, broken paving slabs, or street lighting) and these, in turn, can inform the inhabitants when a given issue will be solved. An example of such a platform is FixMyStreet used in cities and countries across the world.

Crowdsourcing

Online citizen engagement is a tool of e-democracy that enables involvement in the decision co-creation process, to various extents. This method is an open invitation to every citizen, willing to participate in particular issues, via a free-access online platform. There are 5 different forms, which serve authorities, to align their policies with citizens' needs and interests: crowdsourcing of opinions (1), ideas (2), funds (3), tasks (4), and data (5).

Hackathon

Hackaton ("Hacking" + "Marathon") is a participatory activity of short duration, where people come together to solve some particular real-life problems (challenges), in a friendly and fairly competition. It provides a space and a time for participants to make progress on problems, they are interested in and an opportunity to learn about specific topics (subject of the hack). Training workshops/lectures are a great parallel track especially for newcomers and for all participants.

Electronic Voting

Electronic Voting (E-Voting) as a term encompasses a broad range of voting systems that apply electronic elements in one or more steps of the electoral cycle. E-Voting support one or more of the following steps in the election or referendum process electronically: the recording, the casting and/or the counting of votes. E-Voting systems can be distinguished between those that are implemented in controlled environments and e-voting systems that are (partially) implemented in uncontrolled environments:

- **E-voting systems in controlled environments** include such forms as punch-card voting, optical scans and direct recording electronic voting machines. They are characterized by the fact that voting is taking place in a physically supervised (by representatives of government or independent electoral authorities) place such as a polling station.

- **E-voting in uncontrolled environments** means that the casting of the vote can take place anywhere outside a polling station, e.g. at home at a PC. The vote is then transmitted over the Internet (hereafter referred to as remote Internet voting), the television, telephone or mobile phone network. Another form of e-voting in a partially uncontrolled environment is kiosk voting. Hereby the voting machine is located in a public place that can only partially be controlled by election officials.

Digital Tools
for Participation

Digital participation tools are dedicated tools designed specifically for engagement, while others are general tools that can be tailored (or repurposed) for engagement.

Some are open-source and/or free to use, while others are subscription-based software (with varying price tags). We've classified the tools in the digital tool database (below) into 12 different purposes or functions. Some tools do numerous (often related) functions, but no tool can perform all of them. They'll sometimes work best when employed in tandem to complete multiple tasks in the engagement process.

Argument visualization

These tools are used to collect and map the various arguments in a debate. They can help to uncover useful insights into how views are linked and demonstrate where are areas of arrangement and divergence. While the insights can be useful, they tend to require participants to complete surveys, which can be uninteresting and unappealing when compared to other discussion-based formats.

Examples and links

•   Consider It consider.it

Co-drafting

Co-drafting tools enable groups to collaborate on text writing and editing. They work best with an established group that has a common goal and established norms for collaboration, though they can be used in other situations.

Examples and links

•   Dropbox Paper - paper.dropbox.com
•   Gogle Docs - docs.google.com
•   Microsoft Office - office.com

Commenting and providing feedback

These tools have some of the same features as co-drafting tools, but they are more focused on gathering opinions to a pre-written text. They could be used to gather feedback on a policy proposal or project plan, for example. In this sense, they are at the consultation end of the participation spectrum but they typically provide a much better experience than traditional consultations, which frequently consist of inaccessible PDF documents uploaded to websites. One advantage of this type of platform is that participants can see other people's comments, which allows for some discussion and the development of ideas.

Examples and links

•   Citizen Space - delib.net/citizen_space
•   Engagement HQ - bangthetable.com/engagementhq-community-software

Crowd-mapping

Participants can use these tools to make suggestions or report problems by pinpointing their location on a map. They have been used for a wide range of purposes, including reporting potholes, directing disaster

relief, proposing community improvements, and tracking election fraud. They can provide a quick and effective way of gathering information about a location from the local community, but in exchange, they require a high level of responsiveness and feedback to participants.

Examples and links

- Commonplace - commonplace.is
- Crowdspot - crowdspot.com.au

Decision-making

These tools are designed to help organize group discussions to facilitate decision-making. They take various forms, with some resembling beefed-up discussion forums and others based on argument visualization. Some are more focused on reaching a consensus, while others are more majoritarian. As with co-drafting, they may be better suited to established groups with a common goal and established norms, but they may also work in other situations.

Examples and links

- ETHELO - ethelo.com
- Democracy OS - democracyos.org
- Loomio - loomio.org

Discussion forums

They allow for discussion of issues among participants, which is beneficial to public engagement. At their best, they can facilitate the exchange and exploration of diverse viewpoints; at their worst, they can be dominated by keyboard warriors and trolls. They must be well moderated, with clear norms established to promote respectful discussion, to be successful.

Examples and links

- Common Ground For Action - nifi.org/en/cga-online-forums
- Discourse - discourse.org

Ideas generation

Participants can use these tools to submit ideas in response to a question or challenge. They frequently include commenting and voting functions to allow others to respond to an idea in the hopes that the cream will rise to the top. They are, however, susceptible to the bandwagon effect, in which the most popular ideas rise to the top of the list and thus receive more votes. Some platforms attempt to avoid this by rearranging the order of ideas.

Examples and links

- Citizenlab - citizenlab.co
- Consul - consulproject.org/en

Interactive Q&A

These tools work best in conjunction with conferences (online or in-person) to encourage audience participation during talks and presentations. They, for example, allow participants to provide feedback and/or propose questions that others can help prioritize.

Examples and links

- Mentimeter - mentimeter.com
- SLIDO - sli.do

Interactive whiteboard

These tools work best in tandem with video conferences as a visual way to conduct exercises and/or record discussions. They come in handy when they are integrated into a well-thought-out facilitation plan. As a result, they can be used for a wide variety of activities in a very flexible and imaginative manner.

Examples and links

- Concept Board - conceptboard.com
- Group Map - groupmap.com

Knowledgebase

These tools are designed to help groups collect and organize knowledge. They take various forms, with some resembling Wikipedia and others more akin to discussion boards. Companies frequently use them as a replacement or supplement to customer service teams, assisting loyal users of a product to answer questions from others.

Examples and links

- Stack Overview - stackoverflow.com
- Notion - notion.so

Video-conferencing

They are the best option for deep discussion and/or deliberation. Video-conferencing can be very tiring on participants, so it should only be used in situations that necessitate this level of involvement.

Examples and links

- Adobe Connect - adobe.com/products
- TEAMS - products.office.com
- Zoom – zoom.us
- Google Meet – meet.google.com

Prioritization and voting

Voting and/or prioritization is a feature built into many different types of platforms, particularly those used for idea generation. The danger of some of these platforms is that they force people into binary positions of liking or disliking options or propositions, rather than revealing the nuance of reasons for choices and the values that underpin them.

Examples and links

- CMNT - cmnty.com/#how-it-works
- POL.IS - pol.is

About Communities Driving Change

Communities Driving Change is a project **focused on empowering the common citizen, providing digital tools to allow the expression of needs and opinions, reinforce their civic role and participation with solutions** in an info-inclusive way in local communities using several field activities that will gradually raise the voice of local citizens to its public institutions, improve the quality of information that reaches out political decision-makers.

Communities Driving Change through its approach will allow us a **pragmatic and constructive understanding of the common needs of some of the partner countries' populations and will help to implement tools and methodologies that could assess their needs, concerns, and views of the democratic processes in local communities.**

The reasoning behind our project proves itself more relevant after the European elections 2019 results, where electorate turnout was 50,66%, more than in 2014 (42,61%). This shows a relevant distancing between people, decision-makers, and the legitimacy of the EU democratic process, especially in some member states. This is the reason why we want to trigger the collective memories of our communities through video storytelling, reinforcing our sense of belonging through history, personal stories, case studies, and the expression of concerns, issues, challenges, and dreams through the eyes of youth, regarding their vision of what is Europe.

However, raising awareness and making people from local communities of the 4 countries understand the impact of how

European and national policies have on the way they live, access their needs and common challenges, and discuss their future role in Europe can only be reached through the use of e-participation as an instrument.

For this purpose, in the first phase, we will foster young people's empowerment and participation to reach out afterwards to all people and also help their participation in an info-inclusive. The project will achieve this through a group of proven strategies, tools, and methodologies to better approach the common citizen, by using already tested digital collaborative platforms and tools to deal with the common needs and civic interests of people in these communities. A participatory approach will reinforce people's understanding, close their democratic gap and create greater inclusion regarding social and cultural traits and values, democratic processes, and Europe's history.

To achieve this, we believe that new synergies should be developed through Structured Dialogue and Democracy Labs, in evaluating before and after the information sessions and civic participation facilitation, reinforced by the facilitating public causes using IT platforms, tools, and data mining information.

Themed forums and free expression of opinions will stimulate debates and development of networks to improve the conditions of local governments and reinstate common values in their communities, country, and Europe's heritage, as well as future projects and strategies for these cities and regions. We will stimulate the discussion in a trans-

versal way, through these 4 countries of the concerns and priorities of the EU institutions and challenge these communities to think and express how they see these issues.

Through these democratic and ever-living processes, the interest of many can help the few decide and implement better policies and actions to the living conditions of populations, with clearer visibility of EU's intervention and better communication channels, where young people, community's population, politicians, civic representatives and policy and decision-makers have better tools to decide and show the greater mass engagement of all in policies and decisions.

Partners

Contextos – Cooperativa para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão Social, CRL

Contextos aims at fostering and promoting community empowerment and development as the keystone of processes of change in society, using participatory tools to develop competencies and capabilities within individuals and organisations.

Contextos projects focus on culture, media, education/training, participatory democracy, active citizenship, human rights, intercultural dialogue, non-formal learning, social entrepreneurship, and social inclusion.

Asociacija "Aktyvus Jaunimas"

A for-purpose organisation working with youth and communities in need in Lithuania and across borders.

They have extensive experience in non-formal education, as well as a range of other topics. Most important among which: migration, entrepreneurship, healthy lifestyle, human rights. AY has been actively involved in local and international (youth) projects since the very start of its existence.

United Societies of Balkans (U.S.B.)

A non-profit, non-governmental organisation based in Thessaloniki, Greece working in the field of youth, human rights and intercultural dialogue.

It was founded in 2008 by the inception of a group of active young people who wanted to address the social issues which affect the youngsters in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. The vision and aim of the organisation is the promotion of youth empowerment, participation in the economic and political life, youth mobility, voluntarism and human rights.

Center of Strategies for Youth Development (CSDT)

Is an organization actively involved in project development and implementation in the local, national and international non-formal education sphere, that directly aims at personal and professional youth development.

The Center of Strategies for Youth Development's vision is of a world in which formal education additionally soaks with the non-formal and informal education methods to contribute to the development and accountability processes of the youth. We believe that the vision is achievable only through designing and implementing strategies meant to develop the personal and professional abilities of the youth, both in a formal, academic environment and in a non-formal one.

Funding programme

Europe for Citizens (EFC) support initiatives to strengthen remembrance of the recent European history and to enhance civic participation at EU level.

Democratic Engagement & Civic Participation - Civil society projects

These projects give citizens an opportunity to participate concretely in the EU policy-making process. They stimulate debates to propose practical solutions to issues through cooperation at European level.

Annex

Participation
the local level

Municipality Youth Council – Juvfaro, Faro, Portugal

What is the mechanism about?

The Juvfaro - Youth Council of the Municipality of Faro is the body of the Municipality of Faro which is responsible for giving its opinion on all matters of interest to the municipality, related to youth.

It was created to know the needs, motivations, aspirations and priorities of young people in the Municipality of Faro and "give them a voice".

Who is responsible for the mechanism?
Faro City Council

Who can participate?

- Young people under 30 years old
- Young people belonging to a Youth Association/Student Association
- Young people who belong to an informal youth group

How does it work?

It works as a privileged space for dialogue and analysis of youth problems, aiming at the promotion of activities/initiatives of and for young people.

It is based on a broad, effective and dynamic partnership with the various members

and aims at strategic planning of the intervention in young people, stimulating their participation in civic, cultural and political life.

It also aims to provide the youth of the municipality with the means to study and debate the various themes in the area of youth.

Where to get more information?
cm-faro.pt/pt/menu/208/conselho-municipal-de-juventude.aspx

Municipal committee of consultancy – Thessaloniki, Greece

What is the mechanism about?

Through this mechanism, local people can get actively involved in decision making in their community by taking part in various forms of consultation.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

Municipality of Thessaloniki.

Who can participate?

The committee consists of a maximum of 50 members. 1/3 of the total number should be randomly selected citizens who are willing to take part in this consultancy procedure. The selection of those members is based on a draw among citizens registered in the municipality list and in which list any citizen can be registered. Other members of the committee can be representatives from strategic health authorities or local authorities and politicians can be part of this mechanism.

How does it work?

It is established to cover the needs of the local community according to the interests and the views of the representatives. Thus, the committee is responsible for carrying out different kinds of projects to achieve local development through public dialogue. The duration of the committee follows the duration of service of the municipal authorities.

The committee meets in public at least once per three months and its actions could be determined for the municipality of Thessaloniki, for example in the last meeting were made some crucial decisions for the environmental sustainability of the city with several actions to take place the next months.

Where to get more information?
thessaloniki.gr/participate/?lang=en

Consultative Council for Youth Topics – Timisoara, Romania

What is the mechanism about?

The Consultative Council for Youth Topics is an open council in which NGOs from Timisoara can join. The Council comes together at least once per month and they discuss topics that are relevant for the members to find solutions and to help each other to implement their activities. It is a democratic process and initiative, as everyone is welcomed; the main aim is to provide support for NGOs that want to organize activities and projects in Timisoara.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

The Council is an independent body, but the speakers of the meetings are coordinated by the Mayor (or a delegated person by the Mayor) who is responsible for the facilitation of the meeting, drafting the meeting minutes, sending agendas, and internal communication. It's also a bridge between the needs of organizations and public administration and helps NGOs with their requirements.

Who can participate?
All NGOs from Timisoara work with youngsters or students.

How does it work?

NGOs that work with youngsters or students can join the Council and participate in the meetings.

They discuss projects, ideas, create partnerships, brainstorm project ideas, identify sources of financing and Communicate their need to the public representative so that the Municipality can resolve and help them. As an example, it is much easier for an organization to speak out during a Council Meeting and request a permit for organizing a concert in a park, than filling a lot of forms and requesting a permit from the office of a worker inside the City Hall.

Where to get more information?

* [primariatm.ro/comunitate/consilii-con-sultative/](primariatm.ro/comunitate/consilii-consultative/)

"Kaunas 2022" European Capital of Culture – Kaunas, Lithuania

What is the mechanism about?

At the beginning of 2017, Kaunas was awarded the title of the European Capital of Culture of 2022. Together with various cultural organizations, artists and creators, an infinite and borderless program is being created, which is called the "Šiuolaikinė sostinė" (eng. Contemporary Capital). The whole time until 2022 is a joint journey of Kaunas and Kaunas district "from the temporary to the modern". The program aims to include as many visual arts, music, theatre, literature, new media and technologies, and interdisciplinary arts as possible.

The aim is to unite cultural organizations and creators in the Kaunas region, Lithuania and Europe for a common goal: a process revealing the diversity of European cultures and our local identity in it, which would involve local people and partners from various sectors.

Methods:
Co-creation, participatory culture, local and international cultural partnerships, cross-sectoral (cultural and scientific, business, educational) partnerships, involvement of citizens in cultural and artistic development processes, creation of modernity by knowing one's roots, history and uniqueness, openness, love of city and place, where we live.

There are constantly some open calls to join some initiatives: kaunas2022.eu/kvietimai

City residents in different districts of Kaunas city and region can get involved in the community platform "All as one", "Hello Fluxus!" And other projects. In addition, there is a volunteering program that welcomes not only young people but also older people who can offer not only their time but also knowledge and invaluable life or professional experience.

One of the programs:

- "All as one" is a platform that promotes community through culture. An enriching culture is a creative community. It contains of: "Hello Fluxus!" and "Mordern Districts".

- Aim of the program: to enable different communities to nurture their culture and to become hospitable hosts in their area, sharing culture with Kaunas citizens, Lithuanians and Europeans. (visikaipvienas.eu)

- Ongoing projects of "Fluxus Labas!" (kaunas2022.eu/visi-kaip-vienas)

- Fluxus Laboratories. The aim is to bring together the formal and informal communities of Kaunas city, organizations of various sectors, individuals and to encourage them to get involved in community cultural and artistic activities in a specific neighbourhood.

- Hello Fluxus! kiemas. The aim is to encourage yard residents to change their living environment, to take responsibility for their living environment together with their neighbours, and to creatively address emerging challenges.

- Hello Fluxus! Community initiatives. The aim is to support local initiatives of local and interest communities, to strengthen them with artistic input and publicity.

- Training for community facilitator competencies and community entrepreneurship promotion.

- Major events: Yard Festival and Fluxus Festival.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?
Public institution „Kaunas 2022".

Who can participate?

Anyone who wants – mainly Kaunas and Kaunas District citizens, creators, organizations, but any national and international organizations and creators as well.

How does it work?

Cultural operators, artists, organizers of community activities and all citizens who want to contribute with their suggestions/ideas are invited to send a short description by filling a questionnaire.

Also, there is a volunteering program that people can join: kaunas2022.eu/en/culturists/

Those who want to become ambassadors of "Kaunas - European Capital of Culture 2022" and contribute to the promotion of the project free of charge are invited to contact: irute@kaunas2022.eu

Join any program of "Kaunas 2022" relevant to you: kaunas2022.eu/en/programme/

Special criteria to apply to "Kaunas 2022" projects. They must be:

- Contributing to the goals and directions of the "Kaunas 2022" program.
- Based on inter-institutional and cross-sectoral cooperation.
- Involving international partners;
- Promoting the openness of cultural institutions to new audiences, involving urban communities.
- Increasing the accessibility of cultural services, reducing physical, cultural and other barriers; contributing human and financial resources.

Where to get more information?
kaunas2022.eu/#

Participation at the national level

Structured Dialogue - Portugal

What is the mechanism about?

Structured Dialogue aims to promote the active participation of young people in democratic life and foster debate around the major issues affecting youth.

Specifically, these activities aim to bring young people and decision-makers into the discussion to help develop policies in the sector, notably the EU Youth Strategy. Erasmus+ provides the opportunity for organisations to organize:

- National, transnational, or international meetings or seminars that allow for information, debate, and dialogue between young people and decision-makers
- National, transnational, or international meetings or seminars that prepare the ground for the official Youth Conferences
- Events that promote debate and information on youth policy themes linked to the activities of the Youth Week
- Consultations of young people
- Meetings, seminars, events, or debates between young people and decision-makers and experts on participation in democratic life
- Events simulating the functioning of democratic institutions and the roles of decision-makers therein.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

In Portugal, the Structured Dialogue is coordinated by the National Youth Council.

Who can participate?

Young people aged between 13 and 30. Decision-makers involved in the project may participate regardless of age.

How does it work?

Organisations intending to apply for national or transnational meetings must do so as part of a consortium consisting of at least two organisations from two different countries, of which at least one is a Programme Country.

Organisations intending to apply for national meetings must involve one organisation from a Programme Country.

The applicant is responsible for applying on behalf of the consortium, as well as managing the project. Organizations intending to take part must be established in a Programme or Partner Country.

Applications should be submitted to the National Agency in the Programme Country where the applicant organization is established, or via the Erasmus+ forms website.

Where to get more information?

- ipdj.gov.pt/di%C3%A1logo-estruturado
- cnj.pt/dialogo-estruturado/

<u>Syndicalism - Greece</u>

What is the mechanism about?

Syndicalists are unions of workers of a particular public labour domain (e.g. psychiatrists, farmers, teachers) with the role of advocating for the rights of their colleagues and themselves as workers. Their role is to act in favour of the collective interest of the labour force and to pursue more favourable conditions. Usually, their role comes to opposing the denial of rights deriving from governmental decisions, which makes it always a resisting force.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

Workers themselves have the legal right to establish a Syndicalism, which has to comply with the corresponding legal framework: [e-nomothesia.gr/kat-somateia-sundikalis-tikes-eleutheries/n-1264-1982.html](e-nomothesia.gr/kat-somateia-sundikalistikes-eleutheries/n-1264-1982.html)

Who can participate?

Anyone belonging to the working force of the respective public labour domain for more than 2 months, can be a candidate for being elected. However, each Syndicalism creates its own conditions for what qualifications are needed to be able to enter in it. At least 20 members are needed.

How does it work?

A democratic election process is followed for the election of the representatives of the workers (Syndicalism) and it is recognised by the Government since it holds legal status.

Decision making is also taking place at a democratic level during General Assemblies, where the members of the syndicalism ion are called to vote.

Often Syndicalists are called into action when governmental decisions negatively impact the work of their domain. In this case, common tools of acting are strikes, as well as a presence in the decision-making process (e.g. parliament).

Where to get more information?

Googling a profession together with "syndicalism" or "συνδικαλισμός". Results are mostly in Greek.

Romanian National Youth Strategy – Romania

What is the mechanism about?

Development of an infrastructure dedicated to youth by accessing European funds through existing funding lines - PNRR, POAT, CNI, training, and development of young people by developing a master's program in youth, the inclusion of young people with personal needs, increasing accessibility to young people and organizations, in decision-making processes, at national and European level.

The budget allocated to youth for 2021, but also to the vulnerabilities in this field, namely the problems faced by young people on the labour market and social and economic inequities, as well as possible solutions to these problems: ensuring a quality education system that is accessible to all, but also the su-

pport of young people with limited opportunities to ensure equal opportunities.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?
Romania's Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

Who can participate?
All YOUTH organizations, all public and private institutions that work with young people.

How does it work?

The Romanian National Youth Strategy is the support document, the by-laws on which youth workers guide their activities to achieve the set goals. It is a strategy that provides information regarding the needs of young people and suggestions of activities for fulfilling the needs of youngsters. It is similar to the other youth strategies, but this one has been done at National Level. It provides information and guidance as to the support for youth work in our country.

Where to get more information?

- mts.ro/noutati/ordinul-si-anexa-la-ordinul-mts-nr-1479-din-16-11-2020-privind-aprobarea-strategiei-nationale-anuale-cu-privire-la-informarea-si-consilierea-tinerilor-2020/

Project "Atviros Vyriausybės iniciatyvos" (EN. Open government initiatives)

What is the mechanism about?

The aim of the project is to increase the availability of information about the activities carried out by the Government and the measures of public involvement, to strengthen the competencies necessary for increasing the openness of public administration.

The project aims to develop a consistent and common practice of public consultation in public administration institutions, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration in accordance with the principles of transparency, participation and accountability.

Who is responsible for the mechanism?

Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės kanceliarija (EN. Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania).

Who can participate?

There are a few ways to participate:

1. to become a member of the Open Government Network (there are 7 parts in the Network: citizens, representatives of the non-governmental sector, representatives of municipalities/regions, employees of public sector institutions, business representatives, academy, experts in the fields)

2. OR to use the platform while not becoming a member of the Network by participating in Public Consultations, in surveys, making requests or complaints, organizing Public Consultation yourself, meeting with the Minister, etc.

- A person can become a member of the Open Government Network by filling in a form on the government portal website "E. citizen" by registering: epilietis.lrv.lt/formos/atviros-vyriausybes-tinklo-nario-anketa. For that, the person has to be at least 18 years old.

- The network coordinator shall evaluate the information provided in the questionnaire data and decide on the inclusion of the person in the Network.

- A person may be excluded from the Network if the Network the coordinator decides to submit the person the data do not correspond to the open activities of the Government aspirations, interests of the Network and declared values.

- The decision not to include a person in the Network informed by his e-mail address indicated in the registration form. email address.

The Open Government Network is a network of stakeholder contacts for the dissemination of good practices in open government and the implementation of openness initiatives. The members of the network contribute to the development of the National Open Government Partnership Action Plans and the implementation of their activities. The

activities of the network are coordinated by the LRVK.

How does it work?

There are several sections on how you can use this mechanism:

CONTACT the institution

- Make a request or complaint

ENTER Open Government activities

- **Open Government - what is it?**
- **Why is it important to participate?**
  (Every citizen has the right to participate actively in the life of the state. Why is it important? What are the benefits of participation?)
- **Surveys** (take part in surveys from ministries and the Cabinet Office)
- **Petitions** (what is a petition?)
- **Government Reception** (contact the Open Government Team)
- **Students to Government** (take part in a project and work for a week in the ministry of your choice)
- **Open Government Network** (what is it and why join?)
- **Open Government Partnership** (find out how Lithuania is participating in this initiative)

Where to get more information?

- E-citizen - a space for dialogue between society and government: epilietis.lrv.lt/
- OPEN GOVERNMENT: epilietis.lrv.lt/lt/atvira-vyriausybe-3
- CONTACT the institution: epilietis.lrv.lt/lt/kreipkis-i-institucija

References

Ballard, P. (2014). What Motivates Youth Civic Involvement?. Journal Of Adolescent Research, 29(4), 439-463. doi: 10.1177/0743558413520224

Centrum NGO Poznań. Blog 19/2015 - Drabina partycypacji. Available at: centrumngopoznan.pl/blog-192015-drabina-partycypacji

Checkoway, B., & Aldana, A. (2013). Four forms of youth civic engagement for diverse democracy.

Children And Youth Services Review, 35(11), 1894-1899. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.09.005

Falanga D. (2020). Democracy and Human Rights. Citizen participation during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Insights from local practices in European cities, pp. 1-12. Available at library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/lissabon/17148.pdf

Hughes T. (2020) Digital Tools for participation: Where to start? Available at: involve.org.uk/resources/blog/opinion/digital-tools-participation-where-start~

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2011). Introducing electronic voting. Essential consideration

MySociety. (n.d.). Citizens Make Society. Retrieved July 2, 2022, from mysociety.org

Nikki Slocum N. (2003). PARTICIPATORY METHODS TOOLKIT. A practitioner's manual. pp. 13.

Le Blanc D. (2020). United Nations. DESA Working Paper No. 163 E-participation: a quick overview of recent qualitative trends.

Royo, S., Pina, V., & Garcia-Rayado, J. (2020). Decide Madrid: A Critical Analysis of an Award-Winning e-Participation Initiative. Sustainability, 12(4), 1674. doi: 10.3390/su12041674

Slaev, A., Kovachev, A., Nozharova, B., Daskalova, D., Nikolov, P., & Petrov, P. (2019). Overcoming the failures of citizen participation: The relevance of the liberal approach in planning. Planning Theory, 18(4), 448-469. doi: 10.1177/1473095219848472

Stokłuska E. (2013) E-partycypacja – o co właściwie chodzi i jak to może wyglądać. Available at: publicystyka.ngo.pl/e-partycypacja-o-co-wlasciwie-chodzi-i-jak-to-moze-wygladac.

User participation, Hackathon, Available at: user-participation.eu/planning-the-process/step-5-participatory-methods/development-of-services-or-products/hackathon

Wirtz, B., Weyerer, J., & Rösch, M. (2017). Open government and citizen participation: an empirical analysis of citizen expectancy towards open government data. International Review Of Administrative Sciences, 85(3), 566-586. doi: 10.1177/0020852317719996

Wójcicki M. (2013), Pojęcie, istota i formy partycypacji społecznej w procesie planowania przestrzennego, "Rozwój Regionalny i Polityka Regionalna nr 24", pp. 169-185.